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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 003159

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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/TACTOM: PARLIAMENT GIVES GO AHEAD ON TACTOM

REF: THE HAGUE 3024

Classified By: Charge D'Affaires Chat Blakeman, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

1. (C) Summary: The Dutch government secured parliamentary approval November 22 to purchase 30 tactical tomahawk (TACTOM) missiles for two of its new LC frigates at a cost of approximately 57 million EURO. The Netherlands will become only the third country to acquire TACTOM after the United States and the United Kingdom. The Dutch government is currently working on an official "letter of request" to the U.S. Navy for the purchase. End summary.

Parliament Votes In Favor of TACTOM

2. (C) On November 22, the Dutch Parliament voted down two resolutions tabled from the November 16-17 defense policy debates requesting the government to overturn its decision to procure 30 TACTOMs from the U.S. Opposition Labor Party (PvdA) spokesman Luuk Blom sponsored the first resolution suggesting that TACTOM was not a priority. The second resolution by Socialist Party spokesman Van Velzen described the acquisition as undesirable as it would draw Dutch forces unwillingly into offensive wars. By rejecting these resolutions, Parliament removed one of the last remaining hurdles to Defense Minister Henk Kamp's moving ahead with the procurement. The Dutch government is currently drafting an official "letter of request" to the U.S. Navy to purchase TACTOM, and has requested updated financial information from ODC to ensure that the request is in order.

CDA Swings in Favor

3. (C) The Christian Democratic Alliance (CDA) held the parliamentary swing on the TACTOM purchase (reftel). While supportive of the acquisition, the CDA had earlier questioned whether TACTOM should be a priority following the loss of two Chinook transport helicopters and one Apache attack helicopter during missions in Afghanistan. CDA spokesman Roland Kortenhorst said November 17 the CDA will support the purchase following news that Finance Minister Gerrit Zalm would make available additional funds next year to replace the helicopters. CDA joined the Conservative Liberals (VVD) and Social Democrats (D-66) to vote down the two opposition party resolutions.

Comment:

4. (C) Although the decision to purchase TACTOM's remains controversial and unpopular with large sectors of the public and parliament, the rejection of the opposition motions clears the way for the government to proceed.

BLAKEMAN